

The Issue:

Millions Of Acres Across The U.S. Are Being Managed Too Restrictively, Says The Bureau Of Land Management (BLM) And United States Forest Service (USFS). These agencies have independently recommended approximately 43 million acres of Wilderness Study Areas (WSAs) and Inventoried Roadless Areas (IRAs) across the United States as not suitable for wilderness designation. However, because of current law and regulation, both WSAs and IRAs, even those not suitable for wilderness, must be managed in a restrictive fashion that can restrict access, public enjoyment, and many other activities on these lands. For example, commercial activities, motorized access, and roads and structures are severely limited in WSAs and IRAs, just as they are in formal Wilderness Areas designated by Congress.

- BLM manages over 12 million acres of WSAs, but has recommended 6.7 million acres as not suitable for wilderness. The USFS has recommended 36 million acres of IRAs as not suitable for wilderness.

The Action:

This Common-Sense Legislation Opens These Lands Up For Public Use And Enjoyment. This legislation simply implements the recommendations of BLM and USFS, and lifts the restrictive management practices on these specific 43 million acres of WSAs and IRAs. The bill directs that these lands be managed for multiple use, which includes increased recreational opportunities, responsible resource development and better access for firefighting capabilities. This legislation does not direct these lands to be used for any specific activity; rather, it allows local land managers and surrounding communities to determine through the local land management planning process whether these areas ought to be used for these activities or not. In addition, this legislation would:

- Terminate Secretarial Order 3310 To Ensure These Specific Lands Can Stay Open To The Public. Only Congress has the right to designate Wilderness Areas. However, Secretarial Order 3310 could usurp Congress' authority and undermine this legislation by allowing the Department of the Interior to administratively designate the 6.7 million acres of BLM land this bill releases as "Wild Lands," a vague new term that could lead to management practices similar to those for Wilderness Areas, regardless of Congress' action. That is why H.R. 1581 terminates Secretarial Order 3310 with specific regard to these 6.7 million acres. Essentially, it's a back-up measure to ensure these lands can be managed for multiple use.

- Terminate 2001 And 2005 Nationwide Roadless Rules With Regard To These Lands And Return Management To Local Communities. In 2001, the Clinton Administration directed that IRAs, regardless of wilderness recommendations, be treated very restrictively. This rule was struck down in court and the Bush Administration issued a new rule 2005. This rule was also struck down in court and the 2001 rule has subsequently been reinstated. The legislation terminates both these rules and returns the management responsibilities of the 36 million acres of USFS lands this bill releases to local communities who know best how their local land should be managed.

The Result:

This Legislation Would Result In Increased Economic Activity And Reduced Fire Danger. Allowing these lands to be managed for multiple use opens them up to responsible resource development, better healthy forest management, grazing and numerous recreational activities, including motorized sporting and increased hunting and fishing. These activities would help create jobs and generate new revenue for local communities across the country. In addition, opening up these lands would make it much easier to clear fallen and rotting trees and underbrush, reducing the danger of the out-of-control wildfires that have been prevalent in California and around the nation in recent years.

Kern County:

Approximately 218,000 Acres Would Be Opened To The Public Under This Legislation. There are 11 WSAs in the Bakersfield Field Office jurisdiction totaling 21,143 acres. 18,000 of those acres have been recommended as not suitable for wilderness and would be released public multiple use under this legislation. There are 7 IRAs within the Sequoia National Forest with over 200,000 acres that have been recommended as not suitable for wilderness.